

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 08957 220811Z
ACTION EA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8957

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, KS, KN
SUBJECT: MISSING ROK BATTALION COMMANDER

REF: SEOUL 8953

SUMMARY: UNC HAS ASKED NORTH KOREANS TO CONVENE MAC SECRE-
TARIES MEETING AT 1100 OCTOBER 24 IN CONNECTION WITH THE ALLEGED
DEFECTION AND PROBABLE KIDNAPING OF A ROK BATTALION COMMANDER
AND HIS RADIO OPERATOR. UNC MESSAGE OUTLINING CIRCUMSTANCES OF
DISAPPEARANCE AND GIVING BACKGROUND ON LT COL YU IS INCLUDED.
THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT LTC YU HAD ANY REASON TO DEFECT.

1. UNC HAS BEEN ASKED BY ROK JCS DIRECTOR LT GEN YU PYONG-
HYON, THROUGH ROK MAC REPRESENTATIVE BY Y.S. CHAE, TO CONVENE
A MAC SECRETARIES MEETING TO TELL NORTH KOREANS THAT WE HAVE
REASON TO BELIEVE THAT LT COL YU UN HAK AND HIS RADIO OPERATOR
WERE TAKEN TO NORTH KOREA AGAINST THEIR WILL. UNC HAS AGREED
TO DO SO AND ASKED NORTH KOREANS THROUGH JOINT DUTY OFFICER
BETWEEN 1100 AND 1200 SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22 FOR A SECRETARIES
MEETING TO BE CONVENED AT 1100 MONDAY, OCTOBER 24. UNC PLANS
TO MAKE A LOW-KEY, NON-POLEMICAL STATEMENT TO
EFFECT THAT THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE
TWO SOLDIERS DID NOT GO TO NORTH KOREA WILLINGLY AND ALSO PLANS
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TO REQUEST THAT THE TWO MEN BE BROUGHT INTO THE PRESENCE OF MAC
SECRETARIES SO THAT UNC MAY ASCERTAIN THEIR PREFERENCE.

2. THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS ARE A UNC SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE
INFORMATION CONCERNING THE TWO ROK ARMY MEN WHO WERE REPORTED
MISSING ON OCTOBER 20, 1977. THE INFORMATION BELOW WAS PRO-
VIDED TO UNC BY ROK JCS.

3. BEGIN QUOTE. LT COL YU UN HAK, C.O. 1ST BN, 60TH REGT, 20TH INF DIV, AND HIS RADIO OPERATOR WERE REPORTED MISSING AS OF 200200Z. LTC YU WAS SUPERVISING MEMBERS OF HIS FOURTH COMPANY WHO WERE CHECKING AND REPOSITIONING PK3 GROUND SENSOR DEVICES IN THE VICINITY OF CT 397 384, WHICH IS SOUTH OF THE MDL TAPE. THE SENSORS HAD GIVEN INDICATIONS OF MOVEMENT IN THAT AREA DURING THE PRECEDING THREE NIGHTS. LTC YU LEFT THE WORK PARTY IN RESPONSE TO A RADIO MESSAGE TO CALL HIS REGIMENTAL COMMANDER BY TELEPHONE. AFTER TWENTY MINUTES HAS PASSED AND LTC YU HAD NOT ARRIVED AT THE GUARD POST, ALL POSTS IN THE AREA WERE ALERTED AND A REACTION FORCE SEARCHED THE AREA WITH NEGATIVE RESULTS. AT 200530Z RADIO PYONGYAN ANNOUNCED THAT THE TWO SOLDIERS HAD DEFECTED AND GAVE THEIR NAMES.

4. ITEMS IN THE POSSESSION OF THE TWO SOLDIERS INCLUDED ONE .45 CAL PISTOL, ONE PRC 77 RADIO, AN SOI EXTRACT AND A NOTEBOOK. THE RADIO OPERATOR WAS NOT ARMED.

5. LTC YU IS 36 YEARS OLD, AND HAD BEEN PROMOTED TO LTC IN MAY 1977. HE WAS CONSIDERED TO HAVE HIGH POTENTIAL, HAVING MADE ALL PROMOTIONS IN THE MINIMUM POSSIBLE TIME. HE IS MARRIED, HAS TWO CHILDREN, AND HAS CONTRIBUTED SUBSTANTIALLY TO THE SUPPORT OF HIS PARENTS. THE BATTALION HE COMMANDED OCCUPIES A SENSITIVE SECTOR, AS EVIDENCED BY THE NK KILLING OF A ROK SOLDIER IN CONFIDENTIAL

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MAY OF THIS YEAR AT ALMOST THE SAME SPOT WHERE LTC YU DISAPPEARED. LTC YU WAS NOT UNDER INVESTIGATION AS CLAIMED BY RADIO PYONGYANG.

6. THE AVAILABLE INFORMATION SUPPORTS THE CONCLUSION THAT THE TWO ROK SOLDIERS WERE ABDUCTED AND DID NOT VOLUNTARILY DEFECT. END QUOTE.

7. WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY UNC THAT THE SPOT WHERE THE TWO MEN DISAPPEARED IS A DEFILADE WHICH IS NOT VISIBLE FROM THE TWO ADJACENT ROK GUARDPOSTS, BUT IS VISIBLE FROM A NORTH KOREAN GUARD POST. WE HAVE ALSO BEEN ADVISED THAT THE EVIDENCE OF ABDUCTION AT THIS SITE CONSISTS OF GRASS WHICH HAS BEEN TRAMPLED DOWN AND MANY FOOTPRINTS LEADING OFF INTO THE DMZ.

8. THE DEFENSE MINISTER SPENT MOST OF THE DAY FRIDAY AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHERE HE WAS QUESTIONED CLOSELY ABOUT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE TWO MEN. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THIS ISSUE SHOULD BE RAISED AT THE MAC SECRETARIES MEETING AS OUTLINED ABOVE.
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